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THRU : Chief, Economic Research

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Subject Indexing of FBIS

1. The proposal to subject index FBIS materials has one of the longest and most honorable careers of any procedural proposal in CIA's history. Many surveys of the proposal have been undertaken and an historian would be delighted to study and report on these. It is a little mystifying, however, that the AE/CR should request from OEN a quick answer on this proposal since the last two exhaustive surveys of the proposal were only recently completed. One of these was carried out by Mr. Banks of the reading panel, and the other by one of the task teams set up by AE/CR himself to survey OEN services. Of course, the two surveys came to opposite conclusions, the latter, pro, the former, con.

2. In the time available I was unable even to survey the surveys, and since a great documentary record of expert opinion exists I do not have the temerity to make a positive recommendation. I shall attempt only to set forth some of the issues which may be helpful in deciding whether a new task force should be established to make another definite study of the proposal.

3. Out of the welter of confused opinion the following facts emerge:

a. The FBIS is only part of a long list of daily newspaper type reporting services which overlap each other in diverse ways and degrees. There are, for example, the British counterpart of FBIS, the FID summaries, the Hong-Kong Survey of the mainland press, The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, surveys of local press of Russian countries provided by embassies and legations, a long survey of East German Press from Frankfurt. The list above is not exhaustive.

b. Most of these are not subject indexed. The Current Digest of the Soviet Press and the Hong-Kong Survey of Mainland Press are, however, indexed.

c. The FBIS is the source most frequently read and cited in DIA.

d. The more important information is, the more places it appears in and is recoverable in more ways.

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4. In answer to the question, "should the FBIS material be subject indexed -- answer, yes or no," the following answers were obtained:

a. If you do index it, do not use the intellofax system.

b. Why index this and not the other press coverage services which for many countries give more unique, if less important information?

c. Indexing FBIS would at least be more useful than much of what is now intellofaxed, e.g., East German [REDACTED] (Industrial Division denounces the implication that intellofaxing of East German is useless.) 25X1X4

25X1X4

5. I conclude, pending more careful study of this neglected subject, that:

a. There is no describable and identifiable category of published FBIS material which clearly is a better candidate for subject indexing than other categories of FBIS material.

b. Indexing published FBIS would be marginally useful but not so marginal as other things GCR does. (D/M and D/I say indexing FBIS is more than marginally useful.) (D/I further says that the statement in 5b. is too marginal to be understandable.)

c. Don't use the intellofax system.

d. The USSR and China news material is already to a partial extent recoverable, via other indexed services. These cover the major speeches and announcements fairly well.

e. European Satellites FBIS material is not recoverable through alternative sources, but it consists mainly of major speeches and announcements not suited to detailed subject indexing. Perhaps a broad indexing would be useful.

6. I scanned for careful consideration the conclusion of Task Team No. 3 in its report on coding (memorandum to AD/CR, 1 March, p. 2) that "A printed index of published FBIS material similar to the N.Y. Times index, should be established" and carried out under external contract.

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